

To: Dr. Paul Beran, Interim President, WCSU

CC: Dr. Michelle Brown, Dean of the Macricostas School of Arts & Sciences
Dr. Carina Bandhauer, Chair, Department of Social Sciences

From: Dr. Missy Alexander, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Re: Program Review, Department of Social Sciences

Date: October 6, 2022

Dear President Beran,

Having reviewed the Program Review for the Department of Social Sciences, the report from the external reviewers, and the recommendations of the Dean of the Macricostas School of Arts & Sciences, I am recommending that there are several changes that must take place immediately.

Economics

The BA in Economics is not viable in its current form. The students who do succeed in earning this degree do very well, but the enrollments in this major are consistently low. While the economics faculty do an important service in supporting foundational education for the Business degrees, all courses after those foundations are persistently low enrolled.

Summary of Enrollments in all Economics courses other than ECO 211 and 213 (Macro & Micro).

Economics	Sections	Seats Offered	Seats Filled	Fill Rate
2016F	3	75	49	65%
2017S	2	55	33	60%
2017F	2	50	37	74%
2018S	2	60	36	60%
2018F	2	50	27	54%
2019S	3	90	17	19%
2019F	3	95	31	33%
2020S	1	30	9	30%
2020F	2	60	28	47%
2021S	3	75	40	53%
2021F	3	80	35	44%
2022S	3	75	31	41%

This inability to attract students to upper level courses leaves students in the major with independent studies or courses with full-time faculty teaching well under 3-4 students.

This leads to a consistent low-completer problem because there are insufficient students in the major to meet the minimums set by the Board of Regents.

Degrees Conferred

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
BA Economics	10	4	6	6	7

Research provided by the Summer Working Group acknowledges that the minimal reliance on adjunct faculty and the relatively large sections of ECO 211 & 213, keep this program's costs low. Nevertheless, the persistently low enrolled upper level courses create a situation where students in the major end up without a cohort and in independent studies.

Given all of these factors, I recommend the following:

1. Close the BA in Economics.
2. Develop a teach-out plan for the students currently enrolled in the BA in Economics.

Anthropology/Sociology and the Social Sciences

The BA in Anthropology/Sociology has been on a downward trajectory for ten years with a high of 46 in 2012 to 23 in 2021 (most years below 30). The BA in Social Sciences is on a similar path from 43 in 2012 to 11 in 2021. Despite the addition of a Social Sciences FY for students declaring these majors and the undeclared, there was no improvement in the number majors in these disciplines. This persistent low number of majors leads to the routine problem of low enrolled upper level major courses. This is frustrating for students and faculty alike.

Anthropology Courses above the 100 Level

Anthropology	Sections	Seats	Filled	Fill Rate
2016F	3	90	48	53%
2017S	3	90	47	52%
2017F	2	55	37	67%
2018S	2	60	40	67%
2018F	2	90	56	62%
2019S	4	120	46	38%
2019F	4	115	53	46%
2020S	4	80	60	75%
2020F	4	110	49	45%
2021S	2	55	31	56%
2021F	2	50	22	44%
2022S	2	55	29	53%

Sociology Courses above the 100 level

	Sections	Seats	Filled	Fill Rate
2016F	3	85	52	61%
2017S	3	80	68	85%
2017F	2	60	27	45%
2018S	2	60	55	92%

2018F	1	25	18	72%
2019S	5	130	92	71%
2019F	3	85	40	47%
2020S	2	55	50	91%
2020F	2	55	43	78%
2021S	2	50	48	96%
2021F	2	68	38	56%
2022S	3	80	64	80%

The Social Science courses do fill because they support three other degrees: the BA Economics, Anthropology/Sociology, Political Science, and Social Sciences. While this efficient design is admirable it is not enough to support the low-enrolled upper level courses in these majors.

Social Sciences Courses excluding the FY Course

	Sections	Seats	Filled	Fill Rate
2016F	2	35	35	100%
2017S	2	30	30	100%
2017F	2	35	35	100%
2018S	4	90	59	66%
2018F	4	85	83	98%
2019S	4	90	72	80%
2019F	4	85	67	79%
2020S	4	85	61	72%
2020F	4	80	71	89%
2021S	5	105	89	85%
2021F	5	65	41	63%
2022S	3	65	46	71%

Social Sciences Degrees Conferred

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
BA Social Sciences	12	8	6	2	5

Anthropology/Sociology Degrees Conferred

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Degrees Awarded	9	8	4	6	5

As noted in the report from the Summer Working Group, the Social Sciences departments do a tremendous service for non-majors. Many degree programs at the university require either SOC100 or ANT100, others take these because they satisfy a general education requirement. This work is of great value, but even with so many students in those introductory classes, there is not a move from a general education exposure to the major. This leads to a high reliance on adjunct faculty in the introductory courses with full-time faculty teaching a smaller number of students in low-enrolled major requirements.

Finally, the most recent report from Eduventures shows that students applying to WCSU express an interest in all Social Science majors at a much lower rate than the average (1% as compared to the national benchmark of 4%). Given all of this information, opportunities to grow these two majors appears limited at best.

In light of all of this information, I recommend the following:

1. Close both the BA in Anthropology/Sociology and the BA in Social Sciences.
2. Develop a teach out plan for those students currently enrolled.

Political Science

The BA in Political Science is the one program in the Social Sciences department that has also seen a steep drop from a high of 73 in 2012 to 42 this fall. This trend is of concern, but not yet at the persistent low-enrollment status.

	Sections	Seats	Filled	Fill Rate
2016F	4	115	86	75%
2017S	4	110	74	67%
2017F	3	85	69	81%
2018S	4	110	78	71%
2018F	3	95	67	71%
2019S	2	70	54	77%
2019F	3	85	54	64%
2020S	3	90	75	83%
2020F	2	59	27	46%
2021S	2	50	41	82%
2021F	3	85	63	74%
2022S	5	143	68	48%

The number of degrees conferred has remained above the low-completer guidelines.

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
BA Political Science	10	19	16	11	14

The recent Eduventures data shows some student interest in the following areas meet or exceed national benchmarks: Government (8% WCSU/8% nationally) and Politician/Civic Leader (5% WCSU/5% nationally)

Taking all of this information into consideration, I recommend the following.

1. Park the BA in Political Science and explore a redesign that will make it stand out from its peers.
2. If no such pathway can be found, I recommend closure.

In addition to the majors, the following minors should also be closed:

1. Anthropology
2. Conflict Resolution
3. Cultural Resource Management

4. Geography
5. International Studies
6. Multicultural Studies
7. Sociology
8. Urban Studies

I recommend the development of two new interdisciplinary minors that meet growing student interests:

- Minor 1: Latina/o/x American Studies
- Minor 2: African American Studies

Both of these minors will draw on some of the existing Sociology and Anthropology courses, and will likely involve History, World Languages and Cultures, Literature, and Theatre courses. Both minors should meet the standard of at least 2 upper level courses, so these might be part of an Interdisciplinary Studies Degree if students choose.

The changes recommended here result in no reduction of faculty lines. Eliminating the need to offer upper level courses in persistently low-enrolled majors will reduce our reliance on part-time faculty in introductory classes.